



BASKETBALL

The NBA in 1989-90: Closing in on \$160 million in rights

From a combination of fees paid by national broadcast and cable television networks and local television and radio, the National Basketball Association expects to bring in approximately \$160 million for the rights to its 1989-90 season. That constitutes a \$22 million—or just under a 14%—increase over 1988-89.

In the fourth year of its current four-year deal, CBS will pay \$47.5 million to the NBA for rights to carry 15 regular season games (the last of those is scheduled to air April 22, 1990), the All-Star game (Feb. 11), and more than 20 post-season games, depending on how long each best-of-five or best-of-seven playoff series runs.

Turner Broadcasting, which this year will move its NBA schedule from superstation WTBS(TV) Atlanta (49.4 million subscribers) to TNT (29.1 million subs), will pay \$27 mil-

lion to show 50 regular season and at least 26 post-season games in 1989-90.

Like Major League Baseball, and unlike the National Football League, whose entire regular and post-seasons appear only on national TV, the NBA gains about half of its rights revenue team by team, locally.

As the league takes in \$74.5 million from CBS and TBS and “a modest amount” from ABC Radio’s coverage of the All-Star and championship series games, the individual NBA teams—there were 25 last year, 27 this year, with the addition of teams in Orlando, Fla., and Minneapolis—will also gain local television and radio revenue.

This year, the league estimates that the 27 teams will bring in \$85 million from local rights—\$65 million from over-the-air and regional cable TV and \$20 million from radio.

NBA, NCAA rights going up for grabs

"This is a historic year for sports rights," said Jack O'Hara, director of programming, ABC Sports. "Take the period between December 1988 and December 1989, and you see that every major sport will be renegotiated, including Olympics, Major League Baseball, the NBA, the NFL and the NCAA basketball tournament," as well as track and field, figure skating and other world class amateur and professional sports. "It is impossible to give you a list of priorities," said O'Hara, "but I will say that retaining properties that are currently successful on your network is extremely important."

By the time CBS launches its 17th consecutive National Basketball Association television season on Saturday, Nov. 25, the Tiffany Network—perhaps the Diamond Network since late last year, when it committed \$1 billion to gain rights to Major League Baseball from 1990 to 1993—could find itself assured of launching a 20th, or perhaps 21st, consecutive NBA season four or five years from now. That is if CBS, like its cable counterpart Turner Broadcasting, is willing and able to match a rights figure that the league is expected to issue at the end of October.

The guessing game is on, said one network source, as to how CBS has set its priorities at a time when its rights to the National Football League and NCAA basketball tournament, as well as to the NBA, are up for renewal. To some, said the source, it seems "obvious that CBS is after all the inventory" available in major sports.

"I think we are committed to being the sports network," said Hal Trencher, vice president, sports marketing, CBS. "We'll do whatever is possible but also prudent" in attempting to extend the NBA contract, he said. As for the upcoming season, CBS believes "ratings will continue to be positive," he said, adding, "There are no indications" of any drop in the November NBA ad market. Trencher cautioned, however, that too much attention can be paid to ratings. "We don't sell on that. We are not selling just numbers. We sell on the fact that it is a premium product."

League officials declined to comment on the perception that, given its investment in Major League Baseball, the NFL, winter Olympics, the NBA and college basketball, CBS is so committed to being the sports broadcast network that it must have the NBA at any price.

However, the league is all but certain to sell games to only one broadcast network and only one cable network, said John Kosner, NBA broadcast coordinator. And indications are that any hike in NBA fees will surely outstrip inflation, because, said one sports rights negotiation veteran, "the value of exclusivity to a network can lift you up into the stratosphere of dollars that people [at sports franchises] are looking for."

And competition may prove another factor destined to drive NBA—not to mention NCAA basketball tournament and NFL—rights higher, as, noted Kosner, "for the first time it appears that there is real interest at all three [broadcast] networks."

"It is safe to assume," said NBC Sports spokesman Ed Markey, "that we are very interested in both the NBA and the NCAA" college basketball tournament, entering the final year of a contract at CBS. "But we're also interested in a lot of other things as well," he said, committing no further comments to the record.

The 1988-89 season may have demonstrated just how mercurial the ratings successes of the NBA can become. Two variables—how long best-of-five or best-of-seven post season playoffs run and, perhaps equally crucial, the presence of big-name players—can make or break ratings. One of the game's best known stars, Boston Celtic Larry Bird, was knocked out of most of the 1988-89 season by an injury. Bird, like L.A. Laker Magic Johnson, draws viewers, as well as spectators, home and away, noted the NBA's Kosner, and Boston without Bird on CBS and TBS probably drew fewer viewers than Boston with Bird would have.

In the post-season, Johnson was injured early in a Lakers-Detroit Pistons championship series. Detroit won the series in only four games, three short of the season championship a year before. Although the first two Lakers-Pistons games broke ratings records, the series average rating dropped from the previous year's 15.4 to a 15.1. Sixth and seventh games have historically seen ratings skyrocket, said Kosner, yet the June 1989 series was the highest rated

four-game series (and the third highest series overall) in NBA history—leaving the league and networks to wonder what might have been had the series been two or three games longer.

Overall, regular season average ratings through 15 games on CBS stayed essentially flat at 5.8 (although the share rose from 16 to 18 over the past two seasons). On WTBS, the average dropped from a 2.9 rating/5 share the year before to a 2.4/4 last season. Pre-championship playoff averages on CBS also appeared to suffer, dropping from 7.2 (over 19 games in 1987-88) to 7.1 (over 16 games in 1988-89). On TBS, the playoff average dropped from 4.4 (over 31 games in 1987-88) to 4.2 (over 26 games in 1988-89).

It is interesting that Johnson and Bird both fell last season, as it was perhaps the 1979 NCAA championship between Bird's Indiana State and Johnson's Michigan State that began a trend that has benefited both college and professional basketball, said Kosner. Conceding that there is a love-hate relationship between the NBA and college basketball, Kosner said that the growth in the number of college games on TV has made it tougher for NBA games to stand out as special. Yet, he admitted, amateur and professional basketball are successfully star-crossed. The success in viewership of the NCAA tournament, agreed ESPN senior vice president, programming, Loren Matthews, has increasingly created higher name recognition among NBA rookie stars, such as (now veteran NBA star) Michael Jordan of the Chicago Bulls.

"Big stars. I don't know if you could call [their presence or absence] point-nine or point-seven of a [ratings] point," said Kosner, "but it has a definite effect."

At bottom, however, the league can make the case that, even in the face of adversity, the NBA is drawing more viewers than ever and is, therefore, worth more than ever before.

One league source said the NBA wants to increase the national broadcast schedule, likely at the expense of the national cable inventory. During the last two seasons, CBS has carried 15 regular season games, the All-Star Game and about 20 post-season games. Turner has carried 50 regular and about 20 post-season games. A change in that equation could alter the relative worth of the broadcast and cable packages.

Turner Broadcasting System has moved its NBA games from its superstation, WTBS, to Turner Network Television this fall, the second year of TBS's third two-year contract with the league.

TNT, which is seen in 33 million homes, far fewer than the superstation's 50-million reach, will carry 50 regular season games as well as a minimum of 26 playoff contests. Included will be 42 games on Tuesday and Friday, with six doubleheaders scheduled.

The season kicks off with the third annual McDonald's Open from Rome on Oct. 20, a four-team tournament—three from Europe and the Denver Nuggets. The first U.S. game will be the Hall of Fame game on Oct. 31, with the Milwaukee Bucks and New York Knicks. The first regular season game will be Nov. 3, with the Detroit Pistons hosting the Knicks.

Ratings for the NBA were down last year on WTBS, scoring a 2.9 rating (combined regular season and playoffs), versus a 3.5 the year before. Turner attributed the drop, ironically, to ESPN losing its National Hockey League package to SCA. ESPN, which carried more college basketball last winter, saw its ratings improve at the expense of the NBA.

Don McGuire, vice president, TBS Sports, said TNT is projecting ratings this year to fall between a 2 and a 3. Except for Cablevision Systems, with several key systems in Boston and New York, most major metropolitan areas, where basketball interest is stronger, are carrying TNT, said McGuire. Because of that, Turner believes the number of homes TNT reaches will be less than the percentage drop from the superstation's 50 million homes to TNT's 33 million. Still, to advertisers, Turner is selling on the basis of the same percentage drop on viewer homes, although internally it believes the drop will not be that severe. All the major incumbent NBA advertisers are back, said McGuire. Additionally, Turner sells its NBA games as a package with 25 Hawk games on the superstation, providing the advertiser the benefit of its 50 million-plus home reach.

Kosner conceded that NBA officials are concerned about the move from the 50 million-subscriber service WTBS to 30 million-

subscriber TNT. "Any time you have pockets of fans who saw games last season who won't see them—at least at the start of—this season, you have to be concerned," he said. Yet the league believes that professional basketball could, over the course of a new contract, help Turner's year-old TNT network surpass WTBS in subscribers, he said, adding that, in any case, "There is a value to reaching all the U.S. homes" via national broadcast.

Turner's top potential competitor, ESPN, indicated only muted interest—mainly because of scheduling limitations—in pursuing a long-term exclusive deal with the NBA. Turner, which is entering its sixth consecutive year as the NBA's exclusive national cable network, "has showed no inclination of giving it up," observed ESPN's Matthews. During the 1982-83 and 1983-84 seasons, ESPN shared an NBA schedule with USA Network.

Although ESPN "loves the NBA," he said, its "baseball commitment makes NBA scheduling more difficult than ever. We want to continue with a sound business practice and not bite off more than we can chew. Would we like to get the NBA? Yes. Is it realistic? Time will tell," he said.

Among cable suitors, also add SportsChannel America, also cultivating an identification with college basketball and now entering its second of three seasons as sole national telecaster of the National Hockey League.

For now, CBS and the Turner Broadcasting System are enjoying exclusive negotiating windows this October and could both close deals before any other network fires a shot.

As for the potential for higher fees for the NCAA basketball tournament, the 66% rights fee increase that ESPN agreed to pay to retain its College Football Association schedule for another four years (BROADCASTING, Oct. 9) could be an indication of how high the next NCAA contract may go.

Another indicator might be the newest deal between the Southeast Conference and ESPN, which doubled its rights payment for SEC football.

Although prime time ratings for college basketball average only about half those of college football, CBS has seen its tournament average rise steadily over the past three seasons—9.2 in 1986-87, 9.4 in 1987-88 and 10 in 1988-89—and the ratings for the championship final itself have risen from 19.6 to 21.3 during that period. Although ESPN's NCAA tournament ratings have fluctuated over the past five seasons, its total of households reached has climbed steadily, as have its regular season ratings and households reached (up 137% since the 1983-84 season) during that same period. Surely those numbers will be on the table this winter. —PDL

tournament have risen steadily over the past three seasons (9.2, 9.4, 10.0), championship game ratings (19.6, 18.8, 21.3), have been strong, and many sources referred to a rise in the strength of the tournament as accepted fact.

But the NCAA, CBS and the tournament itself are centralized, identifiable entities, and the NCAA-CBS contract is exclusive, overlapping with nothing and no one else. To add up or characterize the myriad other national and local rights fees earned by a variety of college conferences and individual schools remains considerably more problematic.

Although most Division I schools have centralized negotiating power at the conference level, any given conference may have rights agreements with a national broadcast network, national cable network, regional syndicator and/or a regional cable service. At the same time, any of its schools may sell remaining games to a local TV station, regional cable channel and/or a local radio station. In some cases, a third party owns broadcast rights to an individual school's sports, such as The American Network Group, which last week announced it had acquired exclusive radio rights to University of Alabama and University of Georgia football and basketball, as well as extending its radio rights with the University of South Carolina. One school in a conference may have its own local deal while another does not.

Disparity in the sizes of markets, audiences and ad revenue within various conference regions leads to disparity in fees. And other factors further complicate the equation. Some conferences produce their own games and barter ad time, or retain all of it outright, thereby making the rights fee an incomplete indicator of the schedule's value.

The Big East, which took its television production in-house several seasons ago, gains approximately \$4 million per season from CBS for a package of regular season and conference tournament games. And a heightened push for exclusivity in an increasingly fragmented marketplace constitutes another fly in the ointment there. In a contract extension completed in early September, the Big East gained a "significant increase" in its rights payments from ESPN in exchange for increased exclusivity. Conceding that local broadcasters and regional cable services will lose some Big East games to ESPN, the conference believes it will gain in national exposure and broader player (and other student) recruiting, while leaving local TV with the more purely local interest games it should have.

Other conferences appear to give preference to local broadcasters, which in larger regions are plentiful and add up to large payments. In the ACC, Raycom and Jefferson-Pilot Telecommunications are paying \$7 million per season for regional syndication rights to a 38-game package. But in an unusual deal already complicated by revenue sharing between conference and syndicator, NBC will distribute the conference championship game elsewhere in the nation while Raycom and JPT distribute it regionally.

Competition among old and new television outlets is also complicating the picture. Take, for example, the recent battle for Southwest Conference rights among current rights holder Raycom and its new partner Prime Network (on one side) and SportsChannel America (on the other). Bidding there, where distribution has been limited to Texas and Arkansas, has gone as high as \$3.45 million per year (over four years) for rights to basketball and football together (BROADCASTING, Aug. 14). A SportsChannel win in that rights contest could mean no over-the-air distribution of the conference package in the schools' home markets and, since SportsChannel has no affiliate service in that region, could also mean severely limited cable distribution in the area as well.

Over-the-air ball

Last season, all three broadcast networks, each offering about 20 regular season games, saw regular season average ratings decline slightly after experiencing larger drops the previous two seasons. Although several network officials referred to the perception among viewers that there is a "glut" of college basketball on TV, none projected that a further decline in ratings or ad revenue would force them to shorten schedules in the foreseeable future.

In any case, noted NBA broadcast coordinator John Kosner,

College ball: Take a number

CBS, with rights to the 1990 NCAA tournament and final; ESPN, with a 225-game schedule, including early NCAA tournament games and several conference championships, and Raycom Sports and Entertainment, with syndication rights to 170 games from six major conferences, remain the big three college basketball television powers.

Other networks and syndicators, including ABC, NBC, SportsChannel America, Black Entertainment Network and Creative Sports Marketing, will, as they did last year, also present regular and post-season schedules between November 1989 and April 1990. But when the multiple levels of regional and local syndicators, regional cable channels and individual TV and radio stations are added to the queue, the suitors going after college basketball properties become legion. In most markets, nearly 500 games will be telecast by the aggregate national networks and local rights holders.

College rights: Revenue streams, plural

CBS has been paying about \$50 million for rights to carry just fewer than 20 NCAA tournament games and the national championship that is the culmination of that tournament. Ratings for the

each telecaster of college and professional basketball will be faced with the challenge of making each telecast "special, to stand apart from the clutter of all these college games."

Although CBS, ABC and NBC each will carry games from across the nation, each will again pin its college basketball identity in the regular season mainly on a particular major conference. Each of their schedules—to be presented almost entirely on Saturdays and Sundays—will, like last season, comprise approximately 20 broadcasts (some of them regionalized). That status quo is not likely to shrink, since audience demand remains high, said one network source, and not likely to grow because of scheduling limits.

CBS's 1988-89 regular season rating-share averaged 4.1/11, following 4.2 in 1987-88 and 4.5 in 1986-87. But that was enough to beat a 3.4/9 for NBC, which had dropped from 5.5 the season before. ABC dropped from second place in 1987-88 to third last season with a 3.3 average and an 8 share. Making another substantial leap upward was CBS's coverage of the NCAA tournament, which reached 10.0 (after 9.2 and 9.4 the previous two seasons, respectively), according to the network. The championship game itself has progressed from 19.6 to 18.8 to 21.3 over the past three seasons.

CBS's 16-week, 100-hour-plus schedule, which begins Dec. 16 with DePaul at North Carolina, will include 24 regular season broadcasts, four of which will be regionalized coverage of two games each. At least 27 teams will appear in those games, and teams from the Atlantic Coast (ACC), Big East, Metro and Southeastern (SEC) conferences will appear five or more times in the regular season. Tournament semifinals and finals in the Big East, the conference upon which CBS has hung its hat, will appear on CBS March 10 and 11, for the fifth consecutive year. And March 10, for the first time since 1985, CBS will cover the championship game from the Metro Conference tournament.

Like the other two network schedules, the NBC lineup testifies to the value of first pick. Dominated by ACC inter- and intraconference matchups, NBC's 20-game season climaxes in March with the ACC tournament championship game. In addition to including 14 regular season appearances by ACC teams, the schedule will include powerhouse matchups, such as Louisville (Metro conference) vs. DePaul (independent) and Duke (ACC) vs. Notre Dame (independent), as well as appearances by teams from the Pac-10, Big Eight, Atlantic 10 and Big West conferences.

For the fourth consecutive year, ABC will increase its basketball coverage as it prepares to cover 27 games (over 20 last year and fewer than a dozen the two previous seasons). "We are still the

new kid on the block, but [we are] in the college basketball business for the long haul," said Jack O'Hara, director of programming, ABC Sports, which began airing basketball in 1987. "We have regionalized more this year to get more conferences and more teams involved and to get more of the local appeal," said O'Hara, who also noted that "of course that increases your costs." ABC will take advantage of its exclusive deal with the Big Ten, opening its Saturday schedule with the Big Ten's Michigan against Arizona on Nov. 25, directly opposite CBS's opening NBA game. The 27-game schedule will include 23 appearances by Big Ten teams. In the first quarter of 1990, ABC will move its college schedule to Sundays to make room for the *Pro Bowlers Tour* and *Wide World of Sports*, a "winning combination for 20 years" on Saturday afternoons, said O'Hara.

College on national cable: Big weeknights on ESPN

A more competitive market is clearly leading toward a stronger emphasis on exclusivity, an element of rights contracts with increasing dollar value. Conference sources said last month that exclusivity played a major role in ESPN's having doubled its rights payment to the SEC and having "significantly increased" its Big East rights fee (BROADCASTING-CABLE, Sept. 11). By virtue of those contract extensions, regional cable services and local broadcasters will be limited to telecasting the "team of local interest" in their markets, making for slimmer local schedules and leaving ESPN with a national schedule unmatched in depth.

Preparing to carry about 225 games this year, 11 more than last season, this season ESPN hopes to strengthen both its prime time schedule and college basketball identity by moving Southeastern Conference (SEC) games out of Saturday afternoon to create "Big Tuesday"—a working title, said Loren Matthews, ESPN senior vice president, programming, but a title that explains the strategy behind creating a new doubleheader night to be anchored by the Big Eight and SEC.

Big Tuesday is modeled on the established Big Monday, which will continue to carry doubleheaders, sometimes tripleheaders, featuring the Big East, Big Ten and Big West, the last of whose games begin at 11 p.m. ET, but afford ESPN more West Coast prime time inventory. SEC teams had previously appeared on Saturdays and Thursdays, the latter of which will remain a potpourri conference-wise. The Big East gets even more national exposure on Big Wednesday, along with the ACC. And although ESPN "will not abandon Saturdays," he said, it will not offer a special conference-grounded identity there.

Coast-to-coast hoops

CBS-TV

NBA: 15 regular season games, 40th All-Star game and more than 20 playoff games, including championship final. **College:** 24 regular season games featuring five or more appearances by teams from Big East, ACC, Metro and Southeastern conferences; Metro championship game and Big East championship semifinals and final, and 19 NCAA tournament games including national championship game (also women's national championship).

ESPN

College: 225 games including new Tuesday night doubleheader (Big Eight and SEC conferences) to complement "Big Monday," Wednesday and Thursday night schedule; early season tournaments, including new ACC-Big East Challenge (four doubleheaders on four consecutive nights); post-season

"Championship Week" (23 conference finals) and 19 games from first half of NCAA tournament.

TNT

NBA: 50 regular season games and at least 26 games from early rounds of playoffs. First year for NBA on TNT, which takes over for co-owned superstation WTBS-TV Atlanta, which retains rights to Atlanta Hawks.

NBC-TV

College: 20 games (including ACC championship) from six conferences, featuring more than 12 ACC games, as well as independents.

ABC-TV

College: 27 games from 12 conferences featuring Big Ten regular season and SEC cham-

pionship next spring.

SportsChannel America

College: 80 games, including 19 Notre Dame games (including all home games not on broadcast networks); five University of Nevada-Las Vegas games and 11 Atlantic 10 games, including conference semifinal.

BET

College: 20-25 games, depending on how long several best-of tournaments from black college conferences run; women's invitational tournament opens schedule in December.

USA Network

College: Diet Pepsi Tournament of Champions, Dec. 1-2, featuring Pittsburgh vs. Oklahoma State and Ohio State vs. North Carolina State.

Instead of "cherrypicking our schedule to find good games," said Matthews, "people now know that on Monday night they will get two quality games." And, concurring with the NBA's John Kosner that making each broadcast "special" is the first antidote to a "glut," he added: "Monday has become special, and we want to extend that success to other nights of the week." Noting that Saturday has been the lowest rated segment of ESPN's basketball schedule, Matthews conceded that the strategy could also minimize ESPN's losses amid the strong weekend college and professional basketball schedules on other networks and local TV.

Despite the "more and better competition," he said, ESPN saw its average prime time rating and household totals increase for a fifth season in a row, from a 1.4 rating and 423,000 households in 1983-84, to a 2.0 rating and just more than one million homes in 1988-89. Its coverage of the first half of the NCAA tournament has also risen from 2.8% and 850,000 homes in 1983-84 to 3.1% and 1.55 million homes last season.

Of ESPN's having "limited ourselves to four nights a week," Matthews observed that the schedule works to "assure our niche on weeknights" within the larger television market, but also allows ESPN to schedule programming for its various nonbasketball niche audiences. "We are a total sports network, and we try to bring the national collegiate basketball picture to the nation," he said of a schedule that will again include several early season tournaments (including the Dodge NIT, Great Alaska Shootout and Maui Classic), "Championship Week," March 3-11, featuring 23 conference title games, and 19 games picked from the first 32 of 64 NCAA tournament games.

By virtue of a four-year agreement signed last April, that schedule will now also include the newly created "The ACC-Big East Challenge Week," a regular season series matching up eight teams from each conference in four doubleheaders, Monday through Thursday, the first week of each December.

The USA Network has cut back considerably on its college basketball schedule, from 32 games two years ago, to 20 last year, to one tournament this year. USA will carry the Diet Pepsi Tournament of Champions from Charlotte, N.C., Dec. 1 and Dec. 2. The tournament will feature Pittsburgh vs. Oklahoma State, and Ohio State vs. North Carolina State.

SportsChannel America will carry 19 Notre Dame games this year, including all home games not on network television. Included in the schedule is the UCLA at Notre Dame game Dec. 17. SCA will also carry five games of UNLV against Big West opponents and 11 Atlantic 10 games, including 10 Saturday game-of-the-week contests, beginning Jan. 17, plus the Atlantic 10 semifinals. A hodgepodge of other games and tournaments will give SCA 80 games this season.

WGN-TV Chicago, which lost Notre Dame to SCA this year, has picked up a package of Illinois games, to complement its package of DePaul contests. Both schools will appear 14 times in a schedule beginning in December.

Black Entertainment Network will carry between 20 and 25 games, depending on the number of games from several tournaments it will feature. The schedule of black conference games begins Dec. 2 with a women's invitational tournament.

Syndication: Local interest, national reach

Once again, 10-year-old Raycom Sports and Entertainment, based in Charlotte, N.C., retains regional syndication rights to six major college basketball conferences: the Atlantic Coast (ACC), Big Eight, Big Ten, Metro, Pacific 10 (Pac-10) and Southwest (SWC). All told, Raycom will produce and distribute 170 games from those conferences, and although in each case over-the-air distribution is limited to the conference region, Raycom continues to successfully sell advertising across its schedules, reaching 75% of the nation, 5% more than it was able to claim last year.

Indeed, Raycom has been able to present to those advertisers impressive numbers from the 1988-89 season. All six conferences saw increases over the previous season in households delivered: ACC up 31.5% in prime time; Metro up 18.4% in prime time; Big Eight up 39.5%; SWC up 12.2%; Pac-10 up 8.3%, and Big Ten up 23.5% on Saturday afternoons. "Naturally, any time you increase household delivery and national reach, it puts you in a better

position with national advertisers," said Ken Haines, executive vice president, Raycom.

Last November, Raycom and the Pac-10 signed a new three-year agreement through the 1991-92 season, and last March, Raycom and the Big Ten signed a new six-year pact running through 1994-95. New deals have also been made with the ACC and Big Eight. College basketball, said Haines, "is more conducive to regionalization" than college football, since with football there are fewer games and more limited windows that force local broadcasters to compete with national schedules, and the cost of production is considerably higher; therefore, national networks appear to be strengthening their hold on football rights.

Raycom will distribute 27 Pac-10 conference games and seven tournament contests to 14 markets in four western states this season. The 22-game Big Ten schedule will go to 38 markets in seven states where Raycom also packages for individual schools that include Michigan and Michigan State, Indiana, Purdue and Northwestern (via cable in Wisconsin).

Stations in 18 markets in five Atlantic Coast states will carry Raycom-Jefferson-Pilot-Telecommunications' 38-game ACC package, which will also be carried nationally on NBC. Raycom's 29-game Big Eight package (including seven Phillips 66-sponsored tournament games) will reach 18 markets in five Midwestern states. Its 26-game Metro Conference package (including two tournament games) has been cleared in 20 markets in eight Tennessee Valley and other southern states. And stations in 19 markets in Texas and Arkansas will carry Raycom's 18-game SWC schedule, which includes three tournament games.

Regional reach

Thanks to a two-month-old agreement between Raycom and Prime Network, many teams in the conferences to which Raycom holds rights—ACC, Big Eight, Big Ten, Metro, Pac-10 and Southwest—will experience extended national exposure. Prime Network is a program-sharing consortium of regional cable sports channels including Home Sports Entertainment (Houston and Dallas), Prime Sports Network (Denver), Prime Ticket (Los Angeles) and Prime Sports Network Midwest (Indianapolis), as well as affiliates in Washington-Baltimore, Detroit and New York.

Within several weeks after Raycom and Prime announced a joint bid for rights to Southwest Conference football, basketball and other sports (BROADCASTING, Aug. 14), the two announced the larger cooperative venture. Through it, as Raycom delivers dozens of conference games to broadcast stations in dozens of markets in each conference region, Prime affiliates outside that region will have access to those games, except where the contract prohibits it or where a shared rights agreement with ESPN or one of the broadcast networks already exists. With the ACC, for example, ESPN carries Raycom games in all regions except the Atlantic Coast.

Most of the Prime affiliates hold rights to one or more local college schedules. Denver-based Prime Sports Network, for example, will carry 12 Colorado State games and also the "Mile High Classic," featuring Colorado State, Colorado, Massachusetts and North Carolina. And Detroit-based Pro Am Sports System will carry 11 Mid-America Conference games between Dec. 2 and March 3.

The extended reach via cable—Prime claims 11 million subscribers total—will undoubtedly improve Raycom's ability to sell spots across its schedule to advertisers that want to reach 70%, and more, of the nation. Prime and Raycom have also made clear their intention to consider joint bids for other properties in the future.

Among partners in the Prime Network program sharing affiliation, Dallas-based Home Sports Entertainment will carry 100 college games, including games from the Southwest Conference and from the Big Eight, Western Athletic, Pac-10 and Metro conferences. HSE contracts with individual schools include Florida State, Louisiana State, Southern Methodist and Houston. And Seattle-based Prime Sports Northwest will carry 15 games encompassing the University of Washington, Washington State and Oregon State. That schedule will also be supplemented by another 15 Pac-10 games from Raycom (via Prime Network). Prime General Manager Clayton said that Raycom telecasts include a revenue-

sharing deal on advertising sold for telecasts.

In Philadelphia, Prism has scheduled about 20 college games from a group of division one local schools it calls the "Philadelphia Big Five." The teams, including Temple, Villanova, St. Joseph's, La Salle and Pennsylvania, are from four conferences, and many of the games carried are inter-conference.

As SportsChannel America offers a national college basketball schedule that includes 19 Notre Dame games, each of its affiliates has gained or retained rights to cover schools in its region. For example, in late September, SportsChannel New York won a new two-year contract with the runner-up for last year's national championship, Seton Hall. SportsChannel New York will carry 73 games in all (65 live), including nine Seton Hall games, 20 Notre Dame games and, entering the last season of a two-year contract with the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference, 13 MAAC games. It will also borrow from SportsChannel Florida's schedule by telecasting three University of Miami games.

SportsChannel Los Angeles will carry six Loyola Marymount games and two Pepperdine games and expects to announce more games early this week. SportsChannel Florida will telecast four University of Florida, 15 University of Miami, 15 University of South Florida and 12 Jacksonville University games, as well as six Sunbelt Conference contests and nine games from the Sunshine Conference.

Some regionals' schedules will be cut this year by ESPN successes in obtaining exclusivity in new multiyear deals with major conferences, including the Big East, Big Ten and SEC (see above). The ramifications for regional channels in Big East markets include the loss of Big East games played by schools not located nearby. For example, the Madison Square Garden Network will lose approximately half a dozen games, as will Home Team Sports. Viewers in those markets wishing to watch games played by teams other than the "team of local interest" will have to tune in to ESPN.

-PDL, MS

Radio roundball roundup

ABC Radio's contract to carry the NBA All-Star Game and the 1990 NBA Championship Finals is the only radio network carrying the NBA. It will be the fourth year ABC has carried the All-Star Game and the sixth time it has carried the finals.

For the eighth consecutive year, CBS Radio will broadcast the NCAA regional semifinals and finals, the "Final Four" and the championship game. The network's NCAA coverage, which begins March 22, 1990, is produced in conjunction with Host Communications, Lexington, Ky. The national championship will be broadcast live April 2 from the McNichols Sports Arena in Denver. CBS coverage will also include three women's games: two national semifinals March 30 and the national championship April 1. All women's games will be broadcast live from the campus of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tenn.

In addition to the games, CBS will present two call-in talk shows: *Selection Sunday*, an NCAA playoff preview scheduled to air March 11, and *Eve of the Final Four*, set for March 30.

Mutual Broadcasting will provide 20 major college basketball games over 10 weeks, with doubleheaders making up the last eight weeks. The network's broadcasts are scheduled to begin Dec. 23. Mutual has two talent teams lined up for announcing duties this year: Tony Roberts doing play-by-play and former NBA player Bob Lanier providing color, and Larry Michaels, director of sports, Westwood One, calling the plays with former Washington Bullet Kevin Grevey providing color.

In addition, beginning Dec. 12 and continuing for 17 weeks, Mutual will present the *Billy Packer Show*. The hour-long weekly call-in talk show will feature basketball analyst Billy Packer, along with guests from the teams.

-LC



The National Basketball Association: city by city

Bucks

WCGV-TV Milwaukee is in the second year of a three-year contract covering the Milwaukee Bucks, with the station retaining the rights. As the head of a four-station network, WCGV-TV will carry 30 away games and a still-undetermined number of playoff games. The announcers are Jim Paschke on play-by-play and Jon McGlocklin on color commentary. The station had sold 65% of its ad inventory and anticipates being at 87% with the close of deals this week. This is "way ahead of last year," said Mitch Nye, vice president and general sales manager. Major sponsors include Hardees, Miller beer and Toyota.

WTMJ(AM) Milwaukee has been covering the



Bucks for 21 years. The station is currently in the second year of a three-year contract, and the rights are jointly held by the station and the team. As the flagship of a 30-station network, WTMJ will cover 87 games this season—five pre-season and 82 regular and any playoff games. Jim Irwin will be on play-by-play on WCGV-TV; Jon McGlocklin will supply color commentary. The ad inventory is 80% sold, with major sponsors including Budweiser, Hardees and Midwest Express.

There is no cable coverage of the Bucks, although, according to Jon Steinmiller, vice president for business operations for the Bucks, "the team is having very preliminary talks with Prime Network and SportsChannel."

Bullets

Home Team Sports, the Washington-based regional cable sports network, will cablecast 30 Washington Bullets games, 29 home and one away. Announcers are Mel Proctor and former Bullets Phil Chenier and Kevin Grevey, who also co-hosts a half-hour pre-game show, *The Bullets Report*. Sponsors include Kodak, Subaru, All-Star Automotive, Giant Foods and Trak Auto. The network expects to be sold out by the start of the season.

WDCB(AM) is in the last year of a two-year contract with the Bullets and expects to re-



new next year. According to Dick Williams, vice president and general manager, most of the Bullets ad time is sold on a spot basis, and

pre-sales have been vigorous. Major sponsors include Anheuser-Busch, Giant Foods and Roy Rogers. The station expects to air at least 28 away games, with Proctor as announcer and Chenier handling color.

WWDC(AM) Washington is the flagship for the Bullets' six-station radio network, which may add one or two more stations as the season progresses. The station's contract runs through the end of the season. There will be 78 games, 41 home and 37 away, including two exhibition games. Charlie Slowes is the announcer.

Bulls

Under a long-term rights contract, Sports-Channel Chicago, a regional cable network serving 1.5 million homes, will televise one pre-season game and 51 regular season Bulls games (27 home, 25 away).

At the same time, superstation WGN-TV Chicago, in the first year of a five-year contract, will broadcast 25 regular season games beginning Nov. 3 (nine home, 16 away). Announcing duties for WGN-TV will be handled by John Dunham and John Kerr.

WLUP(AM) is in the second year of a three-year contract to carry the Bulls. The station will broadcast 100 games, including all pre-season and post-season (during the regular season, 41 games at home, 41 away).



The announcing duties will be handled by two talent teams, Dunham and Kerr, and John Rooney, CBS sports announcer, and Junior Bridgeman, formerly of the Milwaukee Bucks. Ad inventory for the games is practically sold out, according to a station spokesman, with only a few "fringe spots" left.

Cavaliers

This is the second year the Cleveland Cavaliers have retained their radio rights. A 40-station group of affiliates will carry the radio feed emanating from flagship station WRMF(AM) there. Joe Tait will again handle play-by-play for all eight pre-season and 82 regular season games.

The Cavaliers are also entering the third season in which the team retains TV rights. Twenty road games will be shown on WOIO(TV) Shaker Heights, Ohio. Tait will handle play-by-play with former NBA forward Jim Chones as color commentator. On nights when Tait is

announcing for television, Jim Johnson will fill his seat in front of the radio mike.

The team reports that sales are up this year, with over 85% of both radio and TV commercial time for the season sold.

Midway through last season, SportsChan-



nel Ohio bought the rights to cablecast 10 games. SportsChannel is now in its first full year of a multi-year contract with the Cavaliers and will offer 35 regular season games (16 home, 19 away). Play-by-play will be handled by Denny Schreiner with color commentary by Jim Chones.

Celtics

Most teams that want to be in the broadcasting business retain the broadcast rights, produce the games, sell the time and find stations to act as more or less passive outlets. The Boston Celtics has taken its interest in broadcasting a step further. In two separate deals, the franchise last month agreed, subject to FCC approval, to purchase an independent television station and an AM radio outlet in Boston so it can have complete control over its local broadcasts (BROADCASTING, Oct. 2).

WFXT(TV), which the team is buying from Fox Television Stations, will reportedly take over in 1990-91 the televising of the road games. Gannett's WLVI-TV is in the last year of a five-year contract to carry the away games.

Celtics radio fans will not have to change their dials. WEEI(AM), the radio station the Celtics are buying, is already the purveyor of all Celtics games. It begins the third year of a seven-year contract.

The Celtics have yet to make a bid for SportsChannel New England, the regional sports network that is in the third year of a 10-year contract to televise the Celtics home games.

Assuming the WFXT deal goes through, WLVI-TV will begin its last year as the television



home of the Celtics, with Mike Cristino handling play-by-play—he replaces Gil Santos—and former Celtic Bob Cousy doing the color.

For SportsChannel, Cristino will be paired with Mike Gorman and Tom Heinsohn.

WEEI is the flagship for a 55-station network. Who will handle the play-by-play is up in the air as longtime announcer Johnny Most

underwent triple-bypass heart surgery last month, and it is uncertain when or if he will return. Until more is known, Glenn Ordway, Most's color commentator, will do the play-by-play and Doug Brown will handle the color.

Clippers

Cable coverage of the Los Angeles Clippers moves to SportsChannel, which expanded into the Los Angeles area after the team's pay cable outlet for last season, the Z-Channel, went out of business. SportsChannel will show 28 home games. Sales have been "pretty strong, considering that we are just starting out," said Pat McCabe, SportsChannel's advertising manager. Currently the service is seen on 100,000 homes. Budweiser is the key national advertiser, and several local advertis-



ers have also signed on, McCabe said. So far, no announcers for the cable games have been hired.

On broadcast television, the Clippers return to KTLA(TV) Los Angeles. It will broadcast 25 games, four home and 21 away.

The team retains its radio rights. Mitch Huberman, Clippers vice president, broadcast marketing, said that all of last year's major radio broadcast clients have bought into the 1989-90 season. Among them are Subaru, Goodyear, Arco and American Airlines. Ralph Lawler, who last year announced Clipper games with former NBA coach Hubie Brown, will announce them alone this year. The entire Clipper schedule will be heard over KRTH(AM) Los Angeles.

Hawks

WGST(AM) Atlanta has signed a new three-year deal with the Atlanta Hawks to broadcast all of the team's games, including pre-season and playoffs. About 70% of ad time has been sold so far this year, down 10% from this time last year, according to the station. Major ad-



vertisers include Anheuser-Busch, McDonald's, Goodyear Auto Service and Chevron. Steve Holman will call the games.

TV coverage is provided by superstation WTBS(TV) Atlanta, which will broadcast 25 away games for the first time since 1987. WGNX(TV) held the rights last year in a one-year deal. The Hawks are owned by Turner

Broadcasting System, which currently has 50,582,000 subscribers, according to A.C. Nielsen. Ron Thulen will do the play-by-play for WTBS. A color commentator has not been named yet. Should the Hawks make the playoffs, WTBS will broadcast five games.

WTBS last year sold both the Hawks and the NBA. However, this year WTBS is broadcasting the Hawks exclusively, and TNT will broadcast about 50 regular season and 25 playoff games for the NBA. The station says that since it is now covering the Hawks exclusively, sales have gone up and ad time is almost sold out. Major advertisers include Delta Air Lines, Nissan, General Motors and Pizza Hut.

Heat

WBFS-TV Miami purchased the television rights to the Miami Heat and is feeding an eight-station network in Florida, Alabama and Georgia. The stations will carry 25 away games, including four pre-season. WBFS-TV has "about 95% of renewals from last year and we are a few days away from signing several new deals," said Jerry Carr, the station's general manager. The sales are slightly ahead of last year. Major sponsors include Miller beer, Nissan and Texaco.

WQAM(AM) Miami is the flagship for five Florida stations and will carry seven pre-season games (the first pre-season game will not be broadcast) and all regular season and play-



off games, as well as the All Star game. The team retains the rights, and ad inventory is 95% sold. The Heat will also be broadcast in Spanish on WAOI(AM) Miami, which will carry 82 regular season games. Announcers have not been named. The ad sales are a cooperative effort between the station and the team.

The Heat is also covered on cable by SportsChannel Florida, which retains the rights. SportsChannel will carry 41 games including one pre-season, 10 away and 30 regular season. SportsChannel has sold about 70% of its ad inventory, which is ahead of this time last year, and its major sponsor is Budweiser.

Hornets

Radio coverage for the Charlotte Hornets will again be provided by WBT(AM) Charlotte. The station is in the second year of a three-year deal and is the head of a 36-station network. Play-by-play will be handled by Steve Martin, and Gil McGregor will provide color commentary. WBT airs every Hornets game, including pre- and post-season. Martin says that about 90% of the ad time has been sold for the new season and is slightly ahead of last year's pace. Major advertisers include Anheuser-

Busch and First Union Bank.

Television coverage is provided by WCCB(TV) Charlotte. The station, in the second year of a five-year contract, will show 31 road games and will be the originating station of a 12-station network throughout North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. Gary Sparver does play-by-play for WCCB and Mike Pratt adds color commentary. Major advertisers include U.S. Airlines, Anheuser-Busch, All State Insurance and Nissan. WCCB also works with Creative Sports Marketing, a college sports



syndicator, in the production and distribution of the games. Although the Hornets have sold no cable TV rights, Washington-based Home Team Sports reaches the area, and Turner Broadcasting and several of the MSO's on the board plan to launch a regional sports network in the Southeast next year that will include North Carolina.

Jazz

KSTU(TV) Salt Lake City is in the second year of a five-year contract to broadcast Utah Jazz games. The station will carry 26 games, eight of them at home and 18 away. Announcers are Hot Rod Hundley and Utah Jazz director of broadcasting Carl Arky.

The team will carry 25 additional games (20 home, five away) over the Jazz Cable Network, a regional sports network run as a joint venture with Tele-Communications Inc. Hundley and Arky are the announcers. Major sponsors include Anheuser-Busch, Coca-Cola, Chevron, All State and Toyota.

KISN(AM) is in the final year of its contract to



broadcast Jazz games, and hopes to renew. It is the originating station for the Jazz's 10- to 12-station regional radio network. KISN(AM) will simulcast all 82 regular season games, plus eight pre-season, and all playoffs. Hundley handles announcing chores and is joined by Dave Blackwell for a one-hour pre-game and one-hour post-game show. Ron Boone, former player for the Lakers, does all the cable games. The team controls all in-game inventory; the station sells pre- and post-game and shares inventory with the team. The team controls all rights from 10 minutes before to 10 minutes after the game.

Kings

In the second year of a three-year contract, KRBK-TV Sacramento, Calif., will air 30 (24 away and 6 home) Sacramento Kings games

during the 1989-90 season. The station, as rights holder, will produce all telecasts, and has sold between 65% and 70% of its advertising inventory. Major sponsors include Anheuser-Busch, Suburban Ford and Toyota. Announcers, returning from last year, are Grant Napear (play-by-play) and Ted Green (color).

The Kings also have additional coverage this year with a cable package it put together with Pacific West Cable, now in the first year of a five-year contract. The system, which has 3,500 subscribers, will produce 20 home games for showing in the Sacramento area. According to a spokesman for the company, no advertising inventory has been sold yet, and no announcers have been set. The 20 Kings games will be part of the system's basic package, the spokesman added.

As the flagship station in a four-station radio network, KFBK(AM) Sacramento will air four



pre-season and all 82 regular season games, as well as any post-season action. Now in the second year of a three-year contract as radio rights-holder, the station will also produce pre-game and post-game shows. The station has sold 85% of the in-game advertising time and 70% of the adjacencies. Major sponsors include BMW, Foster Farms Chicken and Suburban Ford. Once again, Gary Gerould will handle the announcing chores.

Knicks

Madison Square Garden Network Corp., a Paramount Communications subsidiary, owns the New York Knicks and the MSG Network, the regional cable service. MSGN will be the only TV exhibitor of Knicks games this season. WFOR-TV had been the over-the-air television exhibitor of Knicks games in recent years, but its contract expired at the end of last season and the station, under new MCA management, chose not to renew it. An MSG



spokeswoman said the team will continue to pursue a broadcast TV deal for next season, but that this season, the 78 televised Knicks games will all originate on MSGN. Marv Albert and John Andaries return to handle play-by-play and color, respectively.

On the radio side, WFAN(AM) enters the third

year of a 10-year rights deal, and will carry 83 Knicks games. WPAT(AM) will carry one Knicks game because of a conflict on WFAN. The latter has committed to carrying a New York Rangers hockey game then. Jim Karvelas and ex-Knick star Walt Frazier will call the radio action.

Lakers

The Los Angeles Lakers retain all broadcast and cable rights for coverage of its games. Advertising sales for all media are handled by the team, except for the short-time allotments each has for some of its own commercials. Sales so far this year are going well, according to Keith Harris, Lakers director of broadcasting. Most of the sponsors that signed on last year are back, he said, including Toyota, Coors, the California Lottery, Great Western Bank and Miller beer. Some advertisers are on radio exclusively, while others pay for packages to appear on all media, he said.

Prime Ticket, Los Angeles, holds the pay cable rights and has a long-term contract that lasts through the 1990's. This year, it will have two pre-season and 35 regular season games. Radio coverage remains on KLAC(AM), Los Angeles, which is in the last year of a five-year contract. Negotiations are now in progress for a new contract. There are still



two years on the broadcast TV contract, which remains on KHJ-TV Los Angeles. Announcers for all three media are Chick Hearn, who has handled Laker play-by-play since the franchise moved to Los Angeles in the early 1960's, and Stu Lantz.

Magic

One of the league's two expansion teams this year, the Orlando Magic, has signed five-year deals for radio and TV as well as with the



Sunshine Network, a regional cable service. The team retains both the radio and TV rights, and in both cases is buying the time from the stations and selling the inventory. The television exhibitor is WKCF-TV Clermont, Fla. (ch. 68), which will air 25 away games this season.

WWNZ(AM) Orlando will carry the 90-game slate of pre-season and regular season games. The Sunshine Network will carry 31 home and nine Magic away games, according to Bob Poe, the team's director of broadcasting. David Steele will call the action for the radio broadcasts, while Chip Carey (grandson of Harry Carey and son of Skip) will do play-by-play on the television side. Former Atlanta Hawk player Jack Givens will team with Carey, and do color commentary for the televi-

sion broadcasts. Poe said inventory for the games was about 75% sold, with major sponsors including Anheuser-Busch, Oldsmobile, Pepsi and Olive Garden restaurants.

Mavericks

KTVT(TV) Dallas is slated to air 22 of the Mavericks' away games, plus three wild card games, reports Ken Foote, the station's program manager. As it did last year, the team is putting together a network of stations in neighboring states, but details were not available.



KTVT is a "passive superstation," serving about 3.5 million homes, says Foote. WBAP(AM) Fort Worth is carrying the games until baseball season starts. At that point, KRLD(AM) Dallas will broadcast the Mavericks. The Mavericks retain the rights and sell the advertising, according to Foote.

Home Sports Entertainment is a regional pay cable service within Dallas and a basic service farther from the inner core market area. HSE has a new deal with the Mavericks to carry all 35 regular season home games. In the past HSE has handled distribution of Mavericks playoff games to cable operators on a pay-per-view basis. Allen Stone will handle the play-by-play for the team's telecasts and cablecasts. Ted Davis does radio play-by-play.

Nets

For the first time in four years, some New Jersey Nets games will be televised on an over-the-air station. Beginning Dec. 30, six away games (all on weekends) will be carried by WWOR-TV New York. The team keeps some of the rights with the TV station being primarily responsible for sales. As of last week, announcers had not been chosen.

Most of the team's games will continue to be shown on SportsChannel, the regional cable service with over 1.3 million subscribers, which is mid-way through a long-term agreement with the team. Steve Albert and Bill Raftery will announce the 38 home and 22 away games. SportsChannel, which obtained the rights, declined to comment on its advertising other than to note that Anheuser-Busch



is a large advertiser.

The Nets retain rights to the radio broadcasts, carried exclusively on WNEW(AM) New York. Announcers for all 85 games will be

Howard David (play-by-play), Jim Spanarkel (color) and Mike O'Koren (features and second color).

Nuggets

The Denver Nuggets retains its broadcast rights but splits the advertising time. Of the Nuggets' 39 away games, KTVB-TV Denver will air 30 and KMGH-TV there will broadcast nine, plus one home game. According to the Nuggets' Mike Blake, there are a total of 70 30-second spots. KTVB gets 30 and the team gets 40. They have the same arrangement with KXRM-TV Colorado Springs, which will carry 39 away games and one home game. Blake said a ratio had not been worked out with KMGH-TV.



All TV play-by-play will be handled by Al Albert and Dan Issel. Blake said the ratings last year for the regular season averaged a 6 with a 10 share.

On cable, the Nuggets sold the rights to Prime Sports Network, which also controls the commercial time. PSN is picking up all 27 home games.

KOA(AM) is the flagship radio station for the Nuggets. It will broadcast 82 regular season games and four pre-season contests. KOA has a 20-station network in Colorado, Wyoming and Kansas. Jeff Kingery will do the play-by-play, with Bob Martin providing the color commentary.

Pacers

WNDE(AM) Indianapolis is in the first year of a three-year contract to carry the Indiana Pacers. (WIBC(AM), which had the rights for the past three years, did not bid this year. The reason, according to station general manager Roy Cooper: "Revenues were down, ratings were down and the team was losing.") WNDE has the rights to 85 games—41 home and 41



away in the regular season, plus three pre-season games. It is the flagship for a network of 20-plus stations. Broadcast rights are retained by the team, with ad time currently over 75% sold, which is ahead of last year, according to a team spokesman. Major advertisers include Budweiser, Marsh supermarkets, Pontiac and Coca-Cola.

WXIN(TV) Indianapolis is in the second year of a three-year deal to carry the Pacers. The

station carries 23 games, all away, and is the flagship for a six-station network.

Cable carriage rights to 25 home games have been sold to regional sports channel Prime Sports Network Midwest (owned by TCI and Bill Daniels), scheduled to launch in November.

Pistons

Broadcast television coverage of the World Champion Detroit Pistons will be handled by WKBD-TV Detroit, which is starting the first of a new three-year contract. All television and radio rights are retained by the team. George Blaha will provide play-by-play coverage, with Dick Motta as the color commentator.

Cable television coverage is handled by Detroit-based Pro Am Sports service (PASS), which has scheduled 40 games—25 home, 15 away and three pre-season. Calling the games on cable will be Fred McLeod and Tom Wilson. PASS will replay games between 11 p.m.



and 1 a.m. (Central Time) during swing shift telecasts.

WWJ(AM) is carrying all 82 home and away games this season, with the 14-year play-by-play announcer George Blaha. The Piston games are heard on an 18-station radio network.

Rockets

KTXH(TV) Houston is in the fourth year of a seven-year contract to broadcast the road games of the Houston Rockets. The package includes three pre-season games, 39 regular season contests and all road playoff games. (There are 41 regular season games, but two are in the CBS national window, one of which CBS has already picked up.) Bill Worrell handles play-by-play, with former Rockets coach Tom Nissalke providing color commentary and Bruce Gietzen hosting the studio show. The station holds the broadcast rights. According to KTXH's executive producer, sports, Jeff Montoni, rates are up and advertising is 60% sold, with national a little soft but boosted by the recent addition of Jack in the Box restaurants. Additional national advertisers



include Budweiser, Toyota, Exxon and Rands supermarket.

Regional cable sports service Home Sports

Entertainment has rights to all home games, but carries only 35 because it must juggle its carriage schedule to accommodate coverage of three Texas-based NBA teams, the Rockets, Spurs and Dallas. HSE sells ad time in games, with Group W selling some national time as well. Play-by-play is handled by Bill Worrell and color by Mike Newlin. Former player Calvin Murphy does interviews.

KTRH(AM) carries most of the Rockets' schedule—it is the flagship for a 19-station network. After the beginning of baseball season (April 1), however, the station will likely farm out either conflicting basketball games or the remainder of the schedule to other stations in the market; last year it was KKZR(AM). The Rockets retain the rights. Ad sales are going well, according to the station. The play-by-play announcer is Gene Peterson, with Jim Foley, Rockets director of communications, doing color. KXYZ(AM) broadcasts games in Spanish, with Rolando Becerra and Alex Lopez-Megrete handling announcing duties.

76ers

WPHL-TV Philadelphia holds the broadcast TV rights to the Philadelphia 76ers and is in the fifth year of a six-year contract. The station will carry four pre-season games and all of the team's 41 regular-season away games (except for one game that CBS may pick up). The broadcasts will feature play-by-play from Neil Funk and commentary from Steve Mix. Neil Hartman will be the studio host for halftime and post-game shows, as well as for 15-half



hour pre-game shows. Major advertisers are Miller Brewing Co. and Midway Airlines.

Cable rights for the 76ers are held by Prism, the Philadelphia-based regional sports and movie service that is part of Cablevision Systems Corp. Prism will carry 41 home games, with Jim Barniak doing play-by-play and Jack Ramsay doing color. Prism and the team both sell advertising for the games, and they split the revenue. One major sponsor is Anheuser-Busch.

The 76ers retain radio rights. Games will be carried on an 18-station network, including stations in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland. Returning to do radio play-by-play is Jon Gurevitch. WIP(AM), owned by the same company that owns the Philadelphia Flyers hockey team, will be the flagship station for the radio network, except for the 17 games when a 76ers game is at the same time as a Flyers match. On those occasions, it appears that WHHT(AM) Philadelphia will be the flagship. Radio color commentary for home games will be provided by Funk (the away-game commentator had not been chosen last week). Major sponsors for the radio broadcasts are Gatorade, American Airlines and Meridian Bank, according to Mike Hogan, the 76ers' director of advertising and broadcast sales.

Spurs

KSAT-TV holds all the broadcast television rights to 15 away games in the San Antonio Spurs schedule. The ABC affiliate is in the first year of a three-year contract with the NBA franchise, preempting its prime time schedule to offer maximum exposure for the financially strapped Spurs.

According to James Schiavone, KSAT's president and general manager, the station has worked out a contractual arrangement where the Spurs handle all advertising sales (which is 100% sold for this season), and pays



the station a flat rate per game aired. Red McCombs, the Spurs' owner, bought the team in 1988 for \$47 million, sinking considerable investment into players' salaries and day-to-day operations. Schiavone says the station's commitment is being maintained in "large measure to keep the team in this city," since the Spurs are San Antonio's only professional sports franchise. "I think the arrangement is equitable," Schiavone emphasized. "We are not trying to seem like martyrs...but without the over-the-air exposure, the team would suffer."

The announcing team for KSAT telecasts is Paul Alexander (color commentary) and Dave Barnett (play-by-play).

The Spurs split ad time sales evenly with Home Sports Entertainment (HSE) for cable telecasts, and own the rights for the 30 games (15 home, 15 away) on the premium channel. HSE, which is in the first year of a three-year contract, also produces 10 pay-per-view telecasts for CableCom. Greg Simmons handles the color commentary and Barnett calls the action for all cablecasts.

WOAI(FM) handles the radio broadcasts, and has a four-station Spurs radio network. All 82 games are covered on the 50 kw clear channel that reaches 38 states, according to Jay Howard, the station's play-by-play and color announcer. Andy Everett is the studio host. The Spurs are responsible for all advertising sales.

KSAH(AM) does all Spanish-language radio broadcasts for 16 away games and 46 home contests. The station is in the second year of a three-year contract in which the Spurs retain all broadcast rights. Announcers Ricardo Cias and Armando Qintero call the action.

Suns

Retaining radio rights, the Phoenix Suns broadcast all pre-season and regular season games on an eight-station Arizona radio network led by flagship station KTAR(AM). Phoenix Suns director of broadcasting, Al McCoy, will handle the play-by-play, broadcasting solo for most games. Dick Van Arsdale will join him in the booth on TV-simulcast games to do color commentary. Major radio sponsors include

Anheuser-Busch, Dial Corp. and Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Arizona. Although limited ad time is still available, McCoy said he expected a sellout: "We've been sold out every year I can remember," he said.

KUTP(TV) is in the second year of a five-year



television broadcast contract with the Suns. Although the station holds the rights, the team retains some availabilities (which are sold out, according to McCoy). The Phoenix metropolitan area Dodge dealers association and Smitty's grocery stores are among the major sponsors. McCoy and Van Arsdale will be the announcers for the 25 regular season away games (also simulcast on radio) carried by KUTP.

Arizona Sports Programming Network (ASPN), a service distributed by Dimension Cable (the Times Mirror-owned cable system serving Phoenix), will carry five Sun away games and 15 home games. ASPN sports coordinator George Allen will do play-by-play, and Joe Gilmartin and Dick Van Arsdale will do color on different games.

Supersonics

Over-the-air telecasts of 10 Seattle Supersonics away games can be seen on KIRO-TV. As part of a single-year contract with the Sonics, the station handles about 15% of the advertising sales and is paid a rights fee for carriage of the games, according to KIRO-TV general sales manager, John Norden. The Sonics sell



sponsorships accounting for about 85% of all ad time sold. Former NBA forward Rick Barry provides color commentary and Kevin Calabro calls play-by-play action.

Clayton Packard, general manager of Prime Sports Northwest, said his premium sports channel retains all cable rights, and sells 100% of all cable advertising time. Gary Spinnell, vice president of marketing and sales for the Sonics, said Prime Sports is in the first year of a five-year contract with the team, adding that the channel's potential reach is more than one million cable households.

Prime has scheduled 20 regular season games, 16 of those on the road and the other four yet to be determined. Delayed telecasts of KIRO-TV's broadcasts are also included on the schedule. Although Packard declined to give the amount of ad time sold, he said sponsors include Rainier Beer, Coca-Cola, Cellular One, Ford, Alaska Airlines, Jeep and Pac West.

Of the 30 games on cable and TV, simulcasts can also be heard on Sonics-owned KJR(AM), with Barry and Calabro calling the

action. The 52 remaining radio-only broadcasts are called by Jim Marsh and Calabro. Spinnell says 100% of available ad time has been sold.

Timberwolves

The Minnesota Timberwolves, a first-year expansion team, have kept control of their broadcast rights, including those for pre-game and post-game shows. Only 25 of the team's games will be televised, eight of those on ABC affiliate KSTP(TV) Minneapolis and 17 on co-located independent KITN(TV). Most of the advertising time will be sold by the team to its corporate "partners"—roughly 20 companies that have category-exclusive advertising rights. Among the partners are Miller



beer, Coca-Cola, Super America, First Bank, Northwest Airlines, and Ask Mr. Foster Travel.

All 86 games, including five pre-season, will be broadcast on radio by WDCY(AM) Minneapolis, which has a three-year contract, extendable for each of three successive years at the team's option. The station will sell at least 15 minutes of the roughly 40 minutes total advertising time—including pre-game and post-game shows. WDCY general manager Mick Anselmo said the station is approaching the "sold-out point" for its portion of the time, with advertisers including a sports medicine clinic. He added that the station is using the basketball broadcast to launch a talk sports show, *Sports Line*, which premieres the day after the Timberwolves' opening game.

For both radio and TV broadcasts, the play-by-play will be handled by Kevin Harlan.

Trailblazers

The Trailblazers kick off the 1989-90 basketball season as they have in the past, retaining all rights to television, radio and cable coverage. KOIN-TV remains the broadcast television carrier of 20 road games.

For cable, the team has a package of 15 home games that will be offered on a pay-per-view basis or on a full package basis. The cable package will be offered on systems reaching about 80% of the subscribers in the state.

For radio coverage, the team has a new five-year contract with KEX(AM) Portland to air all home, away, pre-season and any post-season games. The radio network will reach 30 markets via 28 stations. For the radio network, the team owns the satellite and down-

link to distribute the games.

Advertising for all television coverage is sold out, according to Marshall Glickman, vice president, broadcasting and business development, Portland Trailblazers; the radio inventory is almost sold out.

In addition to the game, the team produces several pre- and post-game shows. Starting



90 minutes before the game is *Courtside*, which airs on KEX(AM). Following *Courtside* is a half-hour pre-game show. Following the game, the team produces a 10- to 15-minute interview show, followed by the *5th Quarter*, a 50-minute post-game show. In addition, every Monday night from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. all year long, the team produces *Courtside Monday Night*, which was originally produced solely for radio but now also is carried on cable. Advertising for Trailblazers' programming, outside of the game itself, is nearly sold out.

Major television sponsors for Trailblazers basketball include Miller Beer, Toyota, Coca-Cola, Pay Less drugstores and Alaska Airlines. Major radio sponsors include the Oregon Lottery, Jeep Eagle, Texaco, Anheuser-Busch and Farmers Insurance.

Game announcers are returning from last year. Pat Lafferty and Steve Jones will call the action on television, with Bill Schonley and Geoff Petrie doing the play-by-play and color commentary for radio.

Warriors

Group W's KPIX(TV) San Francisco, the CBS affiliate in the market, is entering the final season of a two-year contract with the Warriors. KPIX will broadcast 18 regular season games, two home and 16 away. Approximately 65% of ad time has been sold, compared to 40% last year. Import sponsorships have been retained.

KCJU-TV San Jose, Calif., will carry 23 games (21 away) and may add several games, as it did last year, if the division race is hot near the end of the season, said Susan Hoffman, assistant, operations. The team retains 10 30-second spots per game, leaving the station about three-fourths of the ad inventory to sell itself, said Hoffman. Hertz car rental and many regional and local advertisers have signed on, she said. Like KPIX, the station will be in its second year of a two-year contract and has entered negotiations to extend the deal. KCJU executives, said Hoffman, foresee no difficulty achieving that end. "I think they are interested in getting as many games on the air as possible, and they appear to be happy with the station," which cut back its schedule last year from 30 to 23 games. "You

can get to a point where advertisers are tapped out," she said.

Launched on Sept. 2, the Pacific Sports Network (PSN), begins the first of four Warriors seasons with a 20-game schedule (to



increase to 30, 35 and 35 the following years of the contract). PSN also retains rights to the Warriors' first home playoff game in the early rounds. With the team having gone in-house full-time with production this year, both broadcast stations and the Pacific Sports Network will field the same announcer team, with Greg Pappa and Jim Barnett calling all the shots.

On the radio side, the Warriors bought time on KNBR(AM) San Francisco with a contract that will last for three years. KNBR will broadcast 82 games, 41 home and 41 away, with radio announcer Steve Physioc. Ad time is 15% better than last year, with 100% being sold. The major radio sponsors are Budweiser, Chevron, Coca-Cola, Farmers Insurance, Acura dealers, Pacific Gas & Electric, Frito Lay, Foot Locker and the California Lottery.

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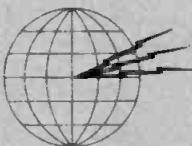
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